

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 22929 262009Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CCO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----013426 262014Z /40
O 261752Z DEC 77 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE NIACT 3464
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T CAIRO 22929

EXDIS

FROM USDEL CAIRO NO. 0036

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON
INR FOR SAUNDERS, NEA FOR SOBER
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, XF, US
SUBJECT: RECESS OF CAIRO CONFERENCE AND ATHERTON'S FUTURE
PLANS

1. THE CAIRO CONFERENCE MET BRIEFLY THIS AFTERNOON,
DECEMBER 26, TO HEAR SUMMARY REPORTS BY ABDEL MEGUID
AND BEN-ELISSAR ON THE SADAT-BEGIN TALKS IN ISMAILIYA.
IN ADDITION, STERNER AND I HAVE HAD SEPARATE PRELIMINARY
READOUTS FROM BOTH ABDEL MEGUID AND BEN-ELISSAR. WE
ARE SENDING YOU A FULL REPORT ON THESE DISCUSSIONS
BY SEPTEL, ALTHOUGH WE REALIZE THAT THE PRINCIPAL REPORTS
ON THE ISMAILIYA TALKS WILL BE COMING FROM EILTS AND
LEWIS AFTER THEY ARE BRIEFED BY SADAT AND BEGIN.

2. VERY BRIEFLY, IT WAS AGREED AT THIS AFTERNOON'S
SESSION TO RECESS THE CAIRO CONFERENCE AS OF TODAY,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 22929 262009Z

WITH TIMING OF ITS RECONVENING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL
TO BE AGREED UPON IN CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES
IN LIGHT OF THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE MINISTERIAL-LEVEL
POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES WHICH WILL BE MEETING
IN JERUSALEM AND CAIRO, RESPECTIVELY, BEGINNING ABOUT
JANUARY 15. ABDEL MEGUID TOLD US THAT FOR PLANNING
PURPOSES, THEY HOPE THE TWO COMMITTEES CAN COMPLETE

THEIR WORK IN FOUR TO SIX WEEKS FROM THAT DATE. HE ALSO SAID THAT EGYPT VERY MUCH WANTS A U.S. "OBSERVER" (AND A UN "OBSERVER" AS WELL IF POSSIBLE) TO TAKE PART IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS IN JERUSALEM. BEN-ELISSAR INDICATED THAT SUCH OBSERVERS WOULD BE WELCOME.

3. THIS PROSPECTIVE TIMETABLE RAISES THE IMMEDIATE QUESTION OF WHAT YOU BELIEVE IT WOULD BE MOST USEFUL FOR ME TO DO IN THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AHEAD. I HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED, AS YOU KNOW, TO ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT AND YOU FOR THE PRESIDENT'S TEHRAN, NEW DELHI AND RIYADH VISITS. GIVEN FACT THAT IT IS ALREADY LATE IN THE DAY TO TRY TO LEAVE CAIRO TUESDAY MORNING, AND DESIRABILITY IN ANY CASE OF BEING HERE TO COMPARE NOTES WITH EILTS FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH SADAT TUESDAY MORNING, I COULD LEAVE CAIRO WEDNESDAY MORNING, AND ASSUMING NO MISSED CONNECTIONS EN ROUTE, COULD ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON WEDNESDAY EVENING. THIS WOULD GIVE ME A CHANCE TO SEE YOU THAT EVENING OR EARLY THURSDAY BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE WITH THE PRESIDENT AND A DAY TO CONSULT WITH THE MIDDLE EAST GROUP IN WASHINGTON, WITH A DEPARTURE FROM WASHINGTON FRIDAY TO CONNECT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PARTY EITHER IN WARSAW OR TEHRAN. ALTERNATIVELY, I COULD SIMPLY REMAIN IN CAIRO AND GO DIRECTLY FROM HERE TO EITHER WARSAW OR TEHRAN ON FRIDAY. IF YOU THOUGHT IT MORE IMPORTANT FOR ME TO BE IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 CAIRO 22929 262009Z

WASHINGTON DURING THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AHEAD, A THIRD ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE TO FLY HOME ON WEDNESDAY AND STAY THERE, WITH SID SOBER GOING ALONG IN MY PLACE FOR THE NEA STOPS ON THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP.

4. PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHICH OF THE FOREGOING ALTERNATIVES WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO YOU, AND I WILL MAKE MY PLANS ACCORDINGLY. I HAVE, INCIDENTLY, CONFIRMED WITH THE EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS HERE THAT THEY DO NOT EXPECT ANY AMERICAN DELEGATION REPRESENTATION TO STAY ON IN CAIRO. THE ISRAELIS ARE DEPARTING FOR JERUSALEM TUESDAY AFTERNOON EXCEPT FOR A SMALL SERVICE CONTINGENT WHICH WILL STAY BEHIND TO LOOK AFTER THEIR COMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATION WHICH I GATHER THEY PLAN TO LEAVE IN PLACE, PRESUMABLY FOR WEIZMAN/GAMASY TALKS AND FOR SUCH TIME AS THE CONFERENCE MAY RECONVENE IN CAIRO. ABDEL MEGUID IS CONSIDERING RETURNING TO NEW YORK UNTIL THE MINISTERIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETS IN JERUSALEM IN MID-JANUARY. EILTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUMMIT MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 26-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CAIRO22929
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770481-0642
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771218/aaaaaoen.tel
Line Count: 113
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 86680efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 130483
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RECESS OF CAIRO CONFERENCE AND ATHERTON'S FUTURE PLANS
TAGS: PGOV, XF, US, EG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/86680efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009